

Special Session, Off to Rough Start, Ends Up Well Thomas Says

By VINCENT THOMAS
 Assemblyman, 68th District
 As is the case at every session, the final moments of our 1960 special session were all hustle and bustle. Those of us with measures still going through the mill were bending every effort to steer them successfully around, over, or under obstacles which arose in committee or on the floor of either house. The rest of us were caught up in the pressure of last-minute committee hearings, or floor debates on hotly contested amendments. Compared to previous special sessions held in even numbered years, this one would appear to stack up very well. Including the proposal to abolish the death penalty (which got the extraordinary treatment of a second special session all its own) there were 40 items on our agenda, which is about average. Legislation related to about three quarters of these items went to the Governor. Another seven or eight subjects have been referred to interim committees for further investigation. Only a very few items were completely rejected.

SPECIAL MEASURES are being enacted to put both the \$300 million school building program and the \$400 million veterans home loan bond issues on the ballot in the June primary election, instead of the November general election. The maximum monthly limit on total loans for school construction has been raised by twenty-five per cent. A transfer loan from the general fund, pending receipt of money from sale of the bonds, was provided to accelerate the school program.

Many competent observers regard the legislative enactment of the master plan for our public system of higher education as one of the most significant accomplishments of the special session. Certainly, the plan will do much to enable our institutions to meet the great challenges of the years to come in providing the best quality of higher education in all fields for our California students.

IT WILL ALSO do much to end unnecessary and expensive competition between the various types of institutions by spelling out the specific functions of the University, the state colleges, and the junior colleges without setting up a rigid constitutional structure. The interplay of the many differing forces which resulted in this legislation gave a truly graphic demonstration of the political compromises which are a basic factor in our American process of legislating.

The successful enactment of anti-smog legislation was another highlight of our session. The need for some control over the exhaust fumes of motor vehicles in many of our metropolitan areas could not be denied. A major question, however, arose as to what type of legislation should be drafted—a law providing a strong centralized administration by the State, or one giving the local authorities responsibility for invoking the law, with the State only approving smog control devices. At first, it seemed unlikely that the two poles of this problem could be reconciled, but to the surprise of some, a nice balancing of interests resulted in an effective control measure.

SATISFACTORY compromises were also worked out in bills to control certain fraudulent practices in the field of home owners' loans and second mortgages which, it was maintained, have cost home buyers millions of dollars in recent years. Last minute Senate amendments preserved the essential features of the original bill.

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